

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for facilitating communication of an instant message and an image to a first user from a second user, the method comprising:

associating the first user with a first user ID;

associating the instant message with the first user ID;

associating the image with the first user ID;

causing the instant message to be communicated to the first user based on the first user ID; and

causing the image to be communicated to the first user based on the first user ID;

wherein the first user is able to receive both the instant message and image from the second user.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the second user uses a broadcaster computer and the first user uses first viewer computer, the method further comprising:

receiving a request to initiate one or more server connections between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer, the connections for passing the image;

facilitating a peer-to-peer connection between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer, the peer-to-peer connection for passing the image; and

facilitating communication of the image over the peer-to-peer connection instead of the server connections, thereby conserving bandwidth of the servers.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

receiving control data for the image from the broadcaster computer.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein a third user uses a second viewer computer, further comprising, after passing the image from the broadcaster computer to the first viewer computer:

passing a request to view the image from a second viewer computer to the broadcaster computer; and

facilitating the reestablishing of a first server connection between the broadcaster computer and the first server computer for passing the image in response to receiving the second viewer computer request; and

facilitating a second server connection between the broadcaster computer and the second viewer computer for passing the image, thereby permitting both the first viewer computer and the second viewer computer to receive the image.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the reestablishing is in response to the broadcaster computer receiving approval from the second user.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the third user is on an approved list.

7. The method of claim 4, further comprising:

maintaining the peer-to-peer connection during existence of the server connection to the second viewer computer;

terminating the second server connection; and

facilitating the passing of the image over the peer-to-peer connection in response to termination of the second server connection.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
associating a second user ID with the second user;
wherein causing the instant message to be communicated to the first user is further based on the second user ID.

9. A method for communicating images from a broadcaster computer to a first viewer computer, the method comprising:
initiating one or more server connections between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer via one or more application servers, the connections for passing an image and an instant message;
receiving an indication to establish a peer-to-peer connection between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer, the peer-to-peer connection for passing the image; and
routing the image over the peer-to-peer connection instead of the server connections, thereby conserving bandwidth of the servers.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the server connections with the application servers are for passing control data for the image.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the server connections are further for passing an instant message.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising, after routing the image over the peer-to-peer connection:

receiving a request from a second viewer computer to view the image; and
in response to receiving the second viewer computer request, reestablishing a first server connection between the broadcaster computer and the first server computer for passing the image; and
establishing a second server connection between the broadcaster computer and the second viewer computer for passing the image, thereby permitting both the first viewer computer and the second viewer computer to receive the image.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the reestablishing is in response to the broadcaster computer receiving approval from a broadcasting user of the broadcaster computer.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the user of the second viewer computer is on an approved list.

15. The method of claim 12, further comprising:
maintaining the peer-to-peer connection during existence of the second server connection to the second viewer computer;
detecting termination of the second server connection; and
automatically rerouting the image over the peer-to-peer connection in response to termination of the second server connection.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the server connections are used for passing instant messages.

17. A method for communicating a series of images from a broadcaster computer to a first viewer computer, the method comprising:

initiating one or more server connections between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer via one or more application servers, the connections for passing the series of images;

routing a first image of the series of images over the server connections from the broadcaster computer to the first viewer computer; and

routing a second image of the series of images over the server connections from the broadcaster computer to the first viewer computer upon receiving an indication that the first viewer computer received the first image.

18. A method for communicating an image from a broadcaster computer to one or more viewer computers, the method comprising:

initiating one or more server connections between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer via one or more application servers, the connections for passing the series of images;

identifying a capacity value of the server connections; and

routing an image over the server connections from the broadcaster computer to the viewer computers if the total capacity of the server connections to the viewer computers is less than the capacity value.

19. A method for passing by one or more application servers images from a broadcaster computer to a first viewer computer, the method comprising:

receiving a request to initiate one or more server connections between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer, the connections for passing an image and an instant message;

facilitating a peer-to-peer connection between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer, the peer-to-peer connection for passing the image; and

facilitating communication of an image over the peer-to-peer connection instead of the server connections, thereby conserving bandwidth of the servers.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

receiving control data for the image from the broadcaster computer.

21. The method of claim 20, further comprising:

passing an instant message from the broadcaster computer to the first viewer computer.

22. The method of claim 19, further comprising, after passing the image from the broadcaster computer to the first viewer computer:

passing a request to view the image from a second viewer computer to the broadcaster computer; and

facilitating the reestablishing of a first server connection between the broadcaster computer and the first server computer for passing the image in response to receiving the second viewer computer request; and

facilitating a second server connection between the broadcaster computer and the second viewer computer for passing the image, thereby permitting both the first viewer computer and the second viewer computer to receive the image.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the reestablishing is in response to the broadcaster computer receiving approval from a broadcasting user of the broadcaster computer.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the user of the second viewer computer is on an approved list.

25. The method of claim 22, further comprising:
maintaining the peer-to-peer connection during existence of the server connection to the second viewer computer;
terminating the second server connection; and
facilitating the passing of the image over the peer-to-peer connection in response to termination of the second server connection.

26. The method of claim 25, further comprising:
passing instant messages between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer.

27. A method for communicating a series of images from a broadcaster computer to a first viewer computer via one or more application servers, the method comprising:

passing a first image of the series of images from the broadcaster computer to the first viewer computer; and
detecting whether an indication from the first viewer computer as to whether the first image has been received; and
passing a second image of the series of images if the first image has been received.

28. A method for passing an image from a broadcaster computer to one or more viewer computers over one or more server connections, the method comprising:
 - detecting a capacity of each of the server connections;
 - determining the total capacity of the server connections;
 - passing the image from the broadcaster computer to the viewer computers only if the total capacity of the server connections is less than a predetermined capacity value of the server connections.